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p10

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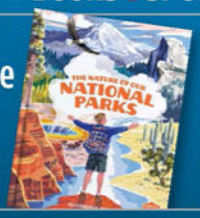

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July 3, 2026 • Vol. 7, Issue 324 • $5.99

Making sense of the world

THE WEEK Junior

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA!

A special issue honoring the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding

DID YOU KNOW?
A 250th anniversary is called a "semiquincentennial," which derives from the Latin words *semi* (half), *quinque* (five), and *centum* (100).

The National Mall, with the Washington Monument in the background

A patriotic stamp

To honor the nation's 250th birthday, the US Postal Service is issuing a new stamp that pays tribute to the Declaration of Independence. It will be released on July 4 at Philadelphia's B. Free Franklin Post Office, which is named for Benjamin Franklin, a founder of America who established the US postal system. (For more about the Declaration of Independence, turn to page 12.)

Nation celebrates 250th anniversary

America is set to observe the 250th anniversary of its founding on July 4, 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was signed and the former British colony became a self-ruled nation. The anniversary will be marked across the country with parties, concerts, exhibits, and other events.

What is planned in Washington, DC?

Numerous events will take place in the nation's capital. Freedom 250, a nonprofit organization created by the White House, is working with the National Park Service to host programs including the Great American State Fair. The event, taking place on the National Mall from June 25 to July 10, will feature more than 150 exhibits and attractions representing every state and US territory, as well as performances by musical artists such as Vanilla Ice and military bands. A fireworks display is set for July 4, along with flyovers and air shows by military aircraft. The Smithsonian Institution is hosting events throughout 2026, including *In Pursuit of Life, Liberty & Happiness*, an exhibit of 250 artifacts that tell America's story.

What is happening elsewhere?

America250, a nonprofit group formed by the US Congress, is planning America's Block Party in Los Angeles, California, on July 4. The musical event will be hosted by Queen Latifah and feature performances by country singer Chris Stapleton and others. America250 is inviting people around the US to host their own block parties and to participate in Giving 4th, a day of service and charity. The group will bury a time capsule outside Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where the Declaration of Independence was signed. The steel container will hold student letters, cultural artifacts, and official US documents and will be sealed until 2276.

Also in Philadelphia, the One Philly: Unity Concert for America on July 4 will feature Christina Aguilera, the Roots, and Wanda Sykes. Officials in Boston, Massachusetts, are inviting people to its central library to handwrite the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution together, while New York City will host Sail4th 250, featuring historic and military vessels. The National Park Service will hold a fireworks show at Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, and Freedom Trucks, a fleet of mobile history museums, will travel the US.

How are young people participating?

Although school is out, students are joining the celebrations. Middle schoolers in Washington are coding and operating 300 drones for a 250th anniversary drone show on July 3. Young people across the US participated in America250's essay contest, writing about what the nation means to them. Students at a high school in Alabama made buttons and posters for the anniversary, and the school's marching band will perform songs that reflect American history. Boston students attended historical reenactments, and New York City public libraries are hosting crafting events, book giveaways, US trivia contests, and a concert by the Young People's Chorus.

What are some of the controversies?

Several states declined to officially participate in the Great American State Fair, citing budgetary issues and concerns that it was a political event supporting President Donald Trump. Most of the musical artists initially scheduled to perform canceled for similar reasons. Many Americans have noted the confusion over events sponsored by Freedom 250 and America250. Rachel Reisner of Freedom 250 said her organization was not concerned. "America's 250th birthday belongs to all of us," she told Nexstar. "We're excited Americans are coming together around this once-in-a-generation moment." In Charleston, South Carolina, where America250 is hosting a block party, organizer Brett Bennett said his city is eager for people to "have a memorable experience during this period as we all come together and commemorate the founding of the nation."

UK leader will step down

In an announcement on June 22, Keir Starmer, prime minister (PM) of the UK, said he would resign as the country's top leader after nearly two years on the job. Starmer is head of the Labour Party, one of the three largest political parties in the UK. He is the sixth PM to resign in 10 years.

In the UK, people don't vote directly for a prime minister. Instead, voters elect MPs (members of Parliament, which is similar to the US Congress and has 650 seats). The party with the most MPs chooses the PM. Starmer came to power after a landslide Labour victory in 2024, but criticism of his leadership had grown in recent months. In his resignation speech, he acknowledged losing support within his own party.

Nominations for a new Labour leader will open in July, and party members will choose someone. Because Labour still has a majority of seats in Parliament, that person will be PM. When *The Week Junior* went to press, it was widely reported that an MP named Andy Burnham would take over. Until then, Starmer will be acting PM.

Keir Starmer

Lionel Messi playing in the World Cup on June 16

JUST GREAT

French player Just Fontaine scored 13 goals at the 1958 World Cup, setting the record for most goals at a single tournament.

History made at the World Cup

The 2026 FIFA World Cup men's soccer tournament, which kicked off on June 11, has delivered exciting and historic action in its first two weeks. In the most notable moment so far, soccer legend Lionel Messi, who is from Argentina, set a new record for the most career World Cup goals. Playing in his sixth World Cup, he scored his 17th and 18th goals on June 22, breaking the 2014 record of 16 goals set by Miroslav Klose from Germany.

Another record fell when Kylian Mbappé became France's all-time leading scorer on June 16, with a total of 15 World Cup goals. The US Men's National Team (USMNT) had a historic start, winning its first two matches against Paraguay and Australia. It's the first time the USMNT has won two World Cup matches in a row since 1930.

On June 15, Cape Verde, a country off the coast of Africa that's competing in its first World Cup, played Spain, the top team in Europe. Cape Verde shocked soccer fans by earning a draw and then another one against Uruguay on June 21.

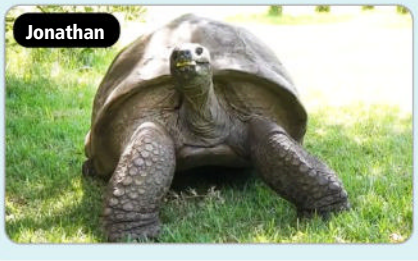
Curaçao, a nation of about 156,000 people and the smallest country to ever make the World Cup, earned a draw against Ecuador on June 20. Curaçao goalkeeper Eloy Room had 16 saves in the match, tying a record set by the USMNT's Tim Howard. Egypt also made history with its first-ever World Cup win over New Zealand on June 21.

When *The Week Junior* went to press on June 24, the group stage of the tournament was nearly finished. The next stage, called the knockout rounds, was set to begin on June 28. The USMNT's first match in those rounds will be played on July 1.

IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

A BIG SHELL-EBRATION

At the age of 194, Jonathan the tortoise is not only the oldest turtle and oldest land animal ever, but he's older than the Eiffel Tower. Ol' Jono, as he's known, lives on St. Helena Island, where he eats grass and soaks up the sun.



Jonathan

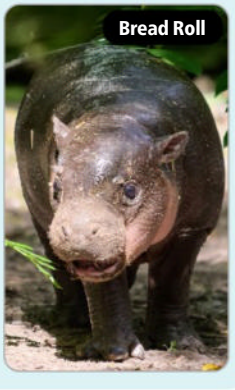
A scene from *Bluey*

BREAKING NEW GROUND

For the first time, beloved children's show *Bluey* will air in Yolŋu Matha, an Indigenous Australian language that has been spoken for thousands of years. Viewers will be "freaking out" when they hear the episodes in their language, said a leader of the Yolŋu community. "It'll be awesome."

AN ADORABLE SENSATION

Who's that pygmy hippo who loves to chomp on leaves and splash in the water? No, it's not Moo Deng, a famous pygmy hippo in Thailand. It's Bread Roll, born at Zoo Berlin in Germany in May and now going viral. Brötchen (her name in German) is a vital addition to her species, which is endangered in the wild. "We are completely in love," zoo staff said.



Bread Roll

ON THE COVER: GETTY IMAGES (2); UNIVERSAL PICTURES; JODI LEVINE FOR SUPERMARKET; COURTESY THE PUBLISHERS; ON THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2); X/GWR; DISNEY; ZOO BERLIN; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES; USPS

HOT SPOT
Nearly 15,000 people visited the campus of the Obama Presidential Center on its opening day.

A view of the center's museum and campus

New portrait unveiled

The Obama Presidential Center features several new works of art, including *The Obamas: Springing Forth* (above) by Nigerian-born artist Njideka Akunyili Crosby. It is the first portrait to depict the former President and First Lady in the same painting. Akunyili Crosby used a technique called photo transfer to create the work.

The Obama Presidential Center opens

On June 19, the Obama Presidential Center , former President Barack Obama (2009–2017) and First Lady Michelle Obama's version of a Presidential library, opened in Chicago, Illinois.

What happened?

The 19-acre center, an $850 million project that took nearly 10 years to complete, is located in Jackson Park, on the city's South Side, where Michelle grew up and where she and Barack began their lives together. The center was unveiled with speeches by the Obamas, a party, and a concert for hundreds of invited guests, which included a wide range of celebrities and politicians alongside the other former US Presidents—Bill Clinton (1993–2001), George W. Bush (2001–2009), and Joe Biden (2021–2025)—and their wives.

What is the center?

The center is meant to be a "living, breathing community place," the Obamas said. It features hands-on exhibits that spotlight Barack Obama's campaigns, major moments from his Presidency, and his years in the White House. One of the largest attractions is a life-size replica of the Oval Office that people can walk through. The campus also features a playground, an athletic center, a garden, performance spaces, and a branch of the Chicago Public Library. On opening day, the Obamas read *Where the Wild Things Are*, a picture book by Maurice Sendak, to children at the library.

How did people react?

Barack Obama said he hopes the center serves "as an affirmation of just how special, how precious our democracy truly is." Tod Williams, the museum's architect (person who designs buildings), said he was in awe of "how many people are deeply moved" by the center. Some local residents expressed disappointment in the building's appearance, especially the 225-foot-tall granite-covered tower, while others said they appreciated the abstract design's intention to represent hope, strength, and unity.

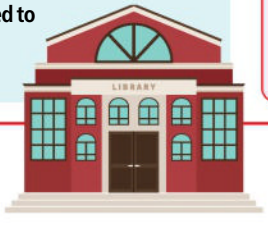
What will happen next?

The center will be open seven days a week. Admission to the outdoor campus and many areas of the museum is free. Tickets are required to enter four floors of the museum tower, and those are sold out through November. The center is expected to draw as many as 1 million visitors annually.

WORD OF THE WEEK

LIBRARY

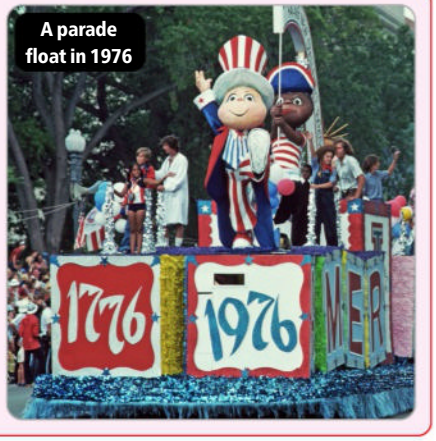
The world "library" comes from the Latin words *liber* ("book") and *librarium* (a "place of books"). Originally, liber referred to the inner bark of a tree, which the Romans used as a writing surface before paper. "Paper" comes from "papyrus," a plant whose giant stalks were used to produce ancient writing material.



THE WEEK IN HISTORY

July 4, 1976
US celebrates its bicentennial

On July 4, 1976, the US celebrated its bicentennial, the 200th anniversary of its independence. President Gerald Ford (1974–1977) led celebrations in Philadelphia and New York City before concluding the day by watching a fireworks display in Washington, DC. Millions of Americans joined in the festivities by participating in parades, fairs, and picnics held across the US.



A parade float in 1976

The device is worn on the arm.

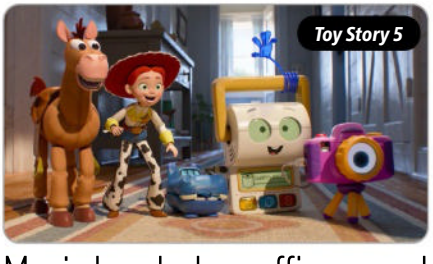
Glucose monitor is approved

The FDA (the US agency that monitors the safety of food and drugs) has approved the first over-the-counter glucose monitor for children with diabetes, a condition that results in too much sugar circulating in the blood. The Stelo Glucose Biosensor System is a small device that patients wear on the back of their arm to receive updates about their blood sugar levels via a smartphone app. The device had previously been approved only for adults.

A rendering of the telescope

Powerful telescope to be built

The world's most sensitive radio telescope is set to be built in the Nevada desert, said the California Institute of Technology, the project's leader. The Deep Synoptic Array will be made up of 1,650 individual radio dishes that will study super-massive black holes, spinning dead stars (known as pulsars), and fast radio bursts from deep space. Construction could begin in 2027 and be finished by 2029.



Movie breaks box office record

Toy Story 5 made the biggest debut at the box office in North America over the weekend, earning about $160 million. It was the most successful opening weekend in the history of the popular *Toy Story* franchise and brought in about $312 million globally. The film follows Jessie, Woody, Buzz Lightyear, and the other toys as they confront how digital technology is changing play.

Singer Demi Lovato performing during the opening ceremony

WISE WORDS

At the start of every Special Olympics, athletes recite the following oath: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

Special Olympics begin in Minnesota

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games began in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on June 20, with a ceremony at the University of Minnesota's Huntington Bank Stadium. Nearly 3,000 athletes from all 50 states and the Caribbean are competing in 16 sports during the weeklong event that takes place every four years. More than 75,000 spectators and fans are expected to attend.

The Special Olympics is the world's largest sports and humanitarian event and provides year-round training and competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. It was established by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, a sister of John F. Kennedy, the 35th US President. Their sister Rosemary had intellectual disabilities. The first Special Olympics Games were held in Chicago, Illinois, in 1968, with the goal of helping society focus on the participants' abilities instead of their disabilities.

The logo for the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games

During this year's opening ceremony, competitors marched in the Parade of Athletes before the Flame of Hope was used to light the ceremonial cauldron. Award-winning musicians Demi Lovato and Jon Batiste performed. Christy Sovereign, leader of the USA Games, said the athletes remind us "what's possible when ability is seen, celebrated, and championed."

Competition began on June 22. Many events are part of Unified Sports, which pairs athletes with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. Among the participants are Minnesota athletes Ruby Dols and Karen Lincoln, who are competing in cornhole, which is making its debut at the Games. Pickleball is also making its debut. Florida athlete Kiondre Brown, a bronze medalist in unified flag football at the 2022 USA Games, is competing in unified basketball with the Alachua All Stars. ESPN will stream 48 hours of live competition, and ABC will present a recap of top moments on July 25.

The Games are set to conclude on June 26. The torch will then be passed to Cleveland, Ohio, host of the 2030 Special Olympics USA Games.

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Cat wanders onto stage during 'Romeo and Juliet' ballet performance" *UPI*

ANNA MURRAY; SPECIAL OLYMPICS USA; STELO BY DEXCOM; CALTECH/K. MILLER AND A. MEJIA; DISNEY/PIXAR; GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3); COURTESY OF THE OBAMA FOUNDATION

Around the world

Christina Koch

Spain
US astronaut wins award

NASA astronaut Christina Koch has won Spain's prestigious Princess of Asturias Award for Concord. In April, Koch flew on the Artemis II mission around the Moon, becoming the first woman to travel to deep space. She also holds the record for the longest spaceflight by a woman: 328 days. Announcing the award on June 17, the jury said Koch "helped extend the frontiers of humanity" and was an inspiration to future generations.

A Cuban street

Cuba
Sharp decrease in tourism

Tourism in Cuba has declined, according to its national statistics agency. Fewer than 360,000 people visited the country in the first five months of 2026—58.4% less than in the same period last year. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, as many as 4.75 million tourists arrived yearly. Airlines and travel companies have reduced their operations in Cuba this year as the US has increased trade penalties and blocked fuel from reaching the island.

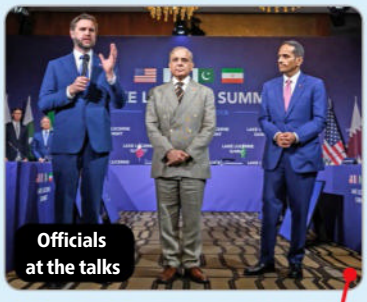
The president

Equatorial Guinea
President's administration resigns

Vice President Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue said Equatorial Guinea's entire Cabinet (top officials) had resigned on June 17 after achieving only 10% of the government's goals. His father, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, has ruled since 1979 and appointed the Cabinet in 2024. He said officials had misused resources and failed to improve the economy.

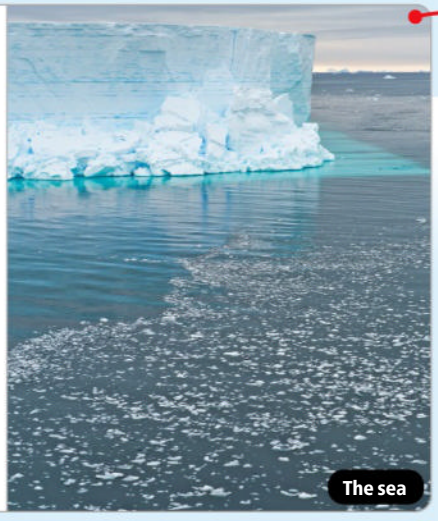
Obbürgen, Switzerland
Peace talks underway

Officials from Iran and the US met in Obbürgen on June 22 to begin peace talks. Under the terms of a preliminary deal, they have 60 days to finalize an agreement to end the war between the countries, which began in February. After the first day of talks mediated by Qatar and Pakistan, US Vice President JD Vance said they'd made "good progress."


Officials at the talks

Antarctica
Sea ice lost

The Bellingshausen Sea, on the west coast of Antarctica, is missing about 250,000 square miles of sea ice. It's currently winter in Antarctica, and sea ice usually expands and covers the area during this time, but satellite observations reveal that the sea is nearly ice-free. Expert Will Hobbs told *The Guardian* newspaper that the lack of ice is probably a result of changes in the ocean. Scientists are investigating whether global warming caused these changes.


The sea

ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES (4), NASA, ADOBE STOCK, ALEX INGLE/SCHMIDT OCEAN INSTITUTE, CWWH, SHUTTERSTOCK

Around the world

A ride at Liseberg

Gothenburg, Sweden
The science of roller coasters

Researchers are launching a project at Liseberg amusement park to examine how thrill rides such as roller coasters affect people. More than 1,000 volunteers are expected to take part in the study, which will explore the effects of positive stress. The scientists say that riding a coaster can be a positive stressful experience because it's scary but also fun.

A floating yoga session on a lake

India
International Yoga Day celebrated

Millions of people participated in special activities on June 21 as the 12th annual International Yoga Day was observed across the globe. Some of this year's biggest celebrations took place in India, where yoga originated as a spiritual practice about 5,000 years ago. Indian president Droupadi Murmu led an event in the city of Jabalpur, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined about 35,000 people for a 45-minute session on Kolkata's Red Road.

Frozen treats in Tokyo

Japan
Ice cream companies investigated

Japan's government is investigating accusations that some of the country's largest ice cream companies have been working together to raise the prices of their products. This practice, called "price fixing," is considered unfair because it doesn't give consumers the option to buy a less expensive product. Typically, prices vary as companies compete against one another. The companies said they would cooperate with the investigation.

The masks

Dolakha, Nepal
Stolen masks returned

Two sacred 16th-century artifacts that were stolen from Nepal more than 30 years ago have returned to their original home. After they were found in US museums, the Akash Bhairav masks were sent back to Nepal in 2024 and displayed at the National Museum in Kathmandu. On June 18, the masks were transported in a ceremonial procession to a shrine in Dolakha.

Mombasa, Kenya
Fishing pledge

On June 17, nations at an ocean conference joined forces to combat illegal fishing. This practice harms marine wildlife and threatens the livelihoods of millions of people who get their income from legal fishing. A total of 15 countries from Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, and the Caribbean signed an agreement called the Mombasa Declaration, promising to share information about fisheries and boats in an effort to help stop illegal fishing.

Fish in the Caribbean Sea

Is it OK to put ketchup on a hot dog?

People disagree on the best condiment for this classic American food.

What you need to know

- **Hot dogs were brought to the US in the 1800s by European immigrants from Germany and Austria. They soon grew popular across the nation.**
- **Americans now eat about 20 billion hot dogs every year. That number includes about 150 million of them on the Fourth of July.**
- **A poll conducted in 2025 found that 53% of Americans prefer ketchup on their frankfurters, but the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council advises against it.**

BIG IDEA Legend has it that the idea for hot dogs started with the Roman emperor Nero.

Hot dogs are such an iconic American food that in 1939, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt served them to the king and queen of the UK (who reportedly loved them, by the way). Although it's clear that many Americans share a love of hot dogs, they definitely don't always agree on what should go on them. And there is no topping that divides people more than ketchup. Hot dog purists say it should never be allowed near their beloved food, and one Chicago, Illinois, hot dog restaurant makes customers who ask for ketchup ring a "bell of shame." But plenty of people reach for the ketchup first. What do you think? Is it OK to put ketchup on a hot dog?

Yes—it's a timeless topper

Ketchup is a classic for a reason. It's sweet and savory, mixes well with other toppings, and perfectly complements the salty bite of a hot dog. Toppings are a personal preference anyway, often based on where people live. In Chicago they eat hot dogs with mustard, relish, onions, pickles, peppers, and tomatoes. In Michigan they like them with chili on top, and New Yorkers prefer them with sauerkraut or onions. With all that going on, what difference does a little ketchup make? Besides, millions of people wouldn't put ketchup on their dogs if it was so awful. Let people eat them however they want to.

No—frankly, it's gross

Ketchup is so sweet that it ends up overpowering the hot dog and making it impossible to taste the spices and other flavors. Even the experts say no way! Although the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council said it's fine for kids to put ketchup on dogs, they also said no one over age 18 should ever add it. Instead, the council recommends mustard, relish, onions, cheese, and chili. Plus, ketchup is used all the time on hamburgers and fries, so why not change it up? There's a world of flavors out there. Try topping hot dogs with pickled peppers or spicy mustard for an adventurous change of pace.

YES Three reasons it's OK to put ketchup on a hot dog

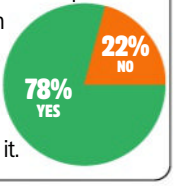
1. **It's a classic condiment that combines well with other flavors and makes a tasty food even better.**
2. **There are already so many variations on hot dog toppings that there's no reason to single out ketchup.**
3. **How could it be bad if so many people like it? Don't yuck their yum.**

NO Three reasons it's not OK to put ketchup on a hot dog

1. **Ketchup is too sweet, and the flavor overpowers the rest of the hot dog.**
2. **Even the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council gives a thumbs down to ketchup and recommends different toppings.**
3. **Skipping the ketchup gives you a chance to expose your taste buds to other, more exciting flavors.**

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if sports jerseys are too expensive. Most of you (78%) think the price of showing team pride is too high, but some (22%) said it's worth it.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think it's OK to put ketchup on a hot dog or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.

GETTY IMAGES

Telling the nation's story

Documentarian Ken Burns explores events that have shaped the US.

For nearly 50 years, acclaimed filmmaker Ken Burns has chronicled American history and culture through long-form documentaries for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). His latest work, *The American Revolution*, is a six-part series that was released to commemorate the nation's 250th anniversary.

Burns grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He graduated from Hampshire College in 1975 with a degree in film studies and design. He soon co-founded the independent production company Florentine Films.

His debut documentary for PBS was *Brooklyn Bridge* in 1981. He later gained fame with *The Civil War* in 1990, which drew about 39 million viewers. Since then, Burns has directed about 40 documentaries on various subjects, including baseball, jazz, and Benjamin Franklin. His films are known for blending archival footage, narration, and interviews. He pioneered a filmmaking technique that involves using slow pans and zooms to create movement within an image—now known as the "Ken Burns effect."

The new series

The American Revolution, which is co-directed by Burns, Sarah Botstein, and David Schmidt, is a 12-hour series exploring the Revolutionary War (1775–1783). It emphasizes civilian and soldier experiences and includes perspectives from groups often left out of history books, such as Indigenous people, enslaved and free Black Americans, and women.

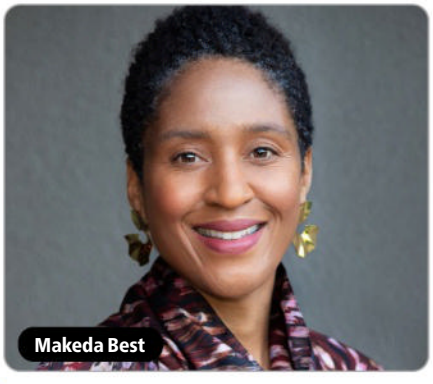
Burns said the series' goal is to help audiences understand the country's origins while shedding light on its present. "History is our best teacher," he told NBC News. "It takes a good story to remind people of the thing that we share in common."

Ken Burns

WOW! Ken Burns has produced a catalog of documentaries that totals nearly 250 hours.

An artistic leader

Makeda Best has been named the chief curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City. In her new role, she will oversee a collection of more than 30,000 works. Best is also an acclaimed photographer whose images documenting war and social change have been exhibited across the US. Most recently, she served as deputy director of curatorial affairs at the Oakland Museum of California. "I'm someone who's very much committed to big stories," Best said.


Makeda Best

Winnie Harlow

Sharing awareness

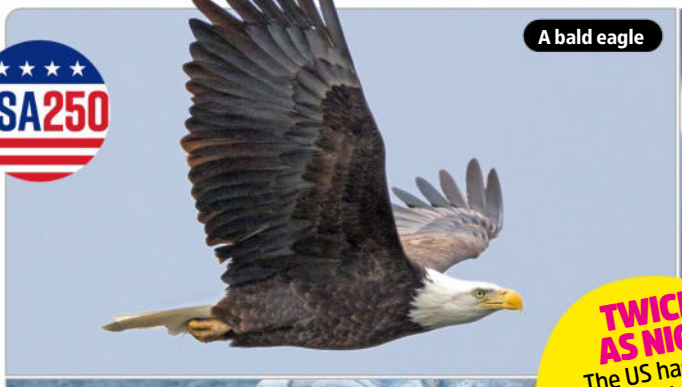
Supermodel Winnie Harlow has become an author with the debut of her picture book, *Simply Winnie*. Harlow has an autoimmune disease called vitiligo, which causes patches of skin to lose color, and she's known for breaking fashion barriers while raising awareness of the condition. *Simply Winnie*, illustrated by Sawyer Cloud, follows a girl with vitiligo who loves wearing bold outfits but doubts herself when she struggles to fit in at school. Harlow wrote the story to inspire readers to embrace their differences. "We are a beautiful blend of all the things that make us *us*," she said.

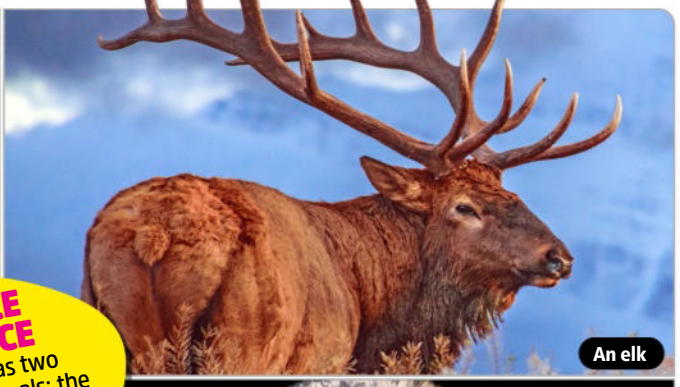
OVERHEARD

"I think it's just as important, or more, as taking care of your body."

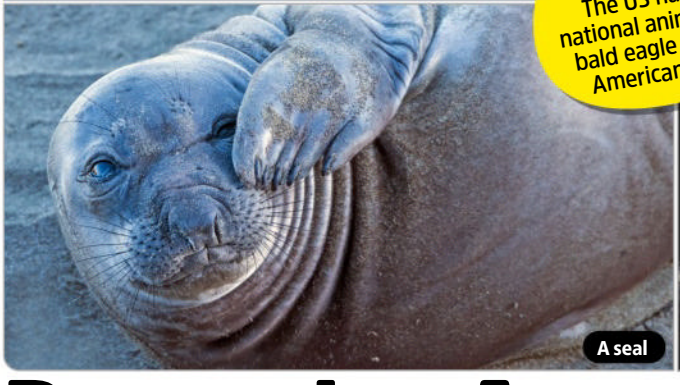
Spanish tennis champion Carlos Alcaraz on focusing on his mental health

STEPHANIE BERGER; PBS; UNIQUE NICOLE; GETTY IMAGES (2)


A bald eagle


An elk

TWICE AS NICE
The US has two national animals: the bald eagle and the American bison.


A seal

A gray wolf

Protecting America's wilderness

From sea to shining sea, this nation has been shaped by its natural landscapes. In turn, its people have shaped the land, sky, and waters—and the wildlife that inhabits them. A long history of environmental conservation helped make America the country it is today.

Conservation in America began in Native American communities, which have existed here for more than 20,000 years. Learning from the natural world, many groups developed sustainable hunting, fishing, farming, and land-management practices that let wildlife thrive.

The arrival of Europeans in the 15th century introduced new practices and non-native animals such as pigs, sheep, and rats. Over time, unrestricted hunting and habitat destruction pushed some native species, including beavers and bison, to the brink of extinction. In 1844, the great auk became the continent's first documented species to go extinct due to human activity. Many fish and wild game populations were also declining. Something had to be done.

California led the charge with laws against killing elk and pronghorns in 1852. In 1871, lawmakers created the Commission on Fish and Fisheries, the first federal agency dedicated to preserving nature. They established the world's first national park, Yellowstone, the following year. Since then, 62 more national parks have been created across the US, keeping vital habitats intact.

Yellowstone National Park

A landmark law, the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), went even further to protect wildlife. One of its greatest successes was the comeback of the bald eagle. In the mid-1900s, America's national symbol was in danger of vanishing from its skies forever. After the government protected the species under the ESA and banned a harmful chemical called DDT, bald eagle numbers rebounded. By 2007, the bird was no longer considered endangered or threatened. Many other iconic animals, including the gray wolf, Florida panther, and American alligator, have also benefited from the ESA's protections.

Conservation laws have also been passed to support migratory birds and marine mammals, such as seals and manatees, and to keep the air and water clean. Efforts like these help protect America's natural beauty for future generations.

Celebrating the nation's nature

Did you know that wildlife is playing a role in America's 250th birthday celebrations? The US Fish and Wildlife Service has been highlighting seven American species each week—one for each of the 250 days leading up to the anniversary. These have included birds, such as the brightly colored scarlet tanager; reptiles, such as the Eastern fence lizard; and mammals, such as the mountain goat. The National Park Service is hosting events around the country, including at Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. And from April through October, the United States Botanic Garden in Maryland is showcasing the official flowers of all the US states and territories.

CHATTY CREATURES
Beluga whales are known to communicate with sounds such as chirps, clicks, and whistles.

A beluga whale

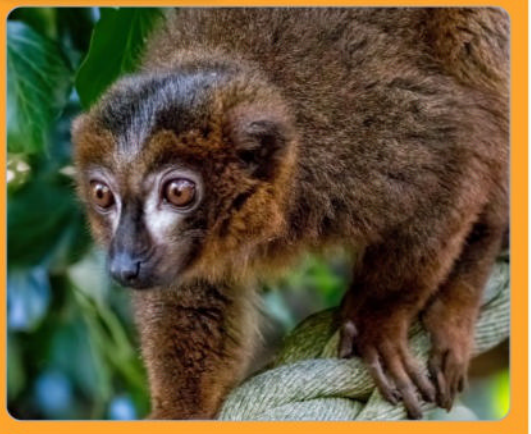
Belugas recognize their reflections

A new study found that beluga whales are capable of looking in the mirror and recognizing themselves. This makes them one of a few species known to have this ability—a type of self-awareness once believed to be exclusive to humans.

Researchers installed a mirror outside the pools of four beluga whales at the New York Aquarium. Two of the whales, an adult female named Natasha and her daughter Maris, soon began nodding and wagging their heads at the mirror to see if their reflection would move. After this discovery, the whales watched their reflections as they blew bubbles, flapped their fins, and did barrel rolls—behavior they did not typically engage in when there was no mirror present.

Finally, the researchers performed what is known as a "mark test." They drew marks on the left or right side of each whale's body to see if the animals would use the mirrors to find the marks. While Maris did not do this, Natasha repeatedly turned the marked side of her body toward the mirror. The study's authors hope to conduct similar tests with more belugas in the future.

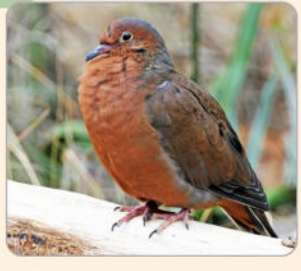
Animal of the week: Collared lemur



At the Bronx Zoo in New York, collared lemur twins recently made their debut. The twins were born as part of a breeding program for this endangered species, which gets its name from the fluffy ring of reddish-brown fur around the lemurs' necks.

- **LIFESPAN:** Up to 25 years in the wild
- **HABITAT:** Tropical forests in Madagascar
- **SIZE:** Up to 16 inches long
- **DIET:** Fruit, flowers, nectar, bark, and insects
- **FUN FACT:** They have tooth combs—special teeth with tiny gaps that help groom their fur.

Good week / Bad week



Socorro doves

Three hatchlings at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park offer new hope for a species that hasn't been seen in the wild since 1972. About 200 Socorro doves are surviving in captivity. The zoo plans to release some into the wild by 2030.

Coral reefs

After studying video footage, scientists have concluded that scuba divers are unintentionally damaging coral reefs. Most divers thought they were being careful, but they often disturbed wildlife or touched reefs, which could cause extensive damage.

GETTY IMAGES (5); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (5); USFWS

Enter *The Week Junior*'s Nature Photo Contest!

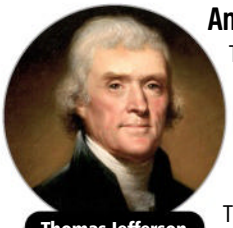
Do you love taking photographs of plants, flowers, trees, and wildlife? Now is your chance to use your creativity, curiosity, and skills to enter *The Week Junior*'s Nature Photo Contest. The entry form for 8- to 10-year-olds is at tinyurl.com/TWJUS-2026PhotoContest-8-10 and 11- to 14-year-olds is at tinyurl.com/TWJUS-2026PhotoContest-11-14. Winning entries will be featured in a September 2026 issue of the magazine. See the official rules at theweekjunior.com/photocontestrules.

The deadline to enter is July 28.

A bold vow to start a

The Declaration of Independence marks the birth of our nation.

In 1776, a document declared that 13 colonies would break free from Great Britain and become the independent United States of America.


Thomas Jefferson

An inspired idea

The Declaration was created to win support for independence from American colonists and possible foreign allies. Thomas Jefferson, its main author, was inspired by the Virginia Declaration of Rights and writings by famous thinkers like philosopher John Locke. The final Declaration was about 1,320 words long and included 27 grievances about Britain's treatment of the colonies. Jefferson's original draft criticized Britain for its support of slavery, but this passage was removed from the final draft. The Declaration also argued that governments should draw their authority from the consent of the governed.

Congress votes for independence.

Drafting the document

The Revolutionary War between American colonists and the British broke out in April 1775 following years of political tension but before the colonies officially declared independence. At the Second Continental Congress on June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia introduced a resolution calling for colonial independence. To win support for the cause, Congress needed to make a list of reasons for independence. Jefferson began writing the first draft of the Declaration around June 11. Congress voted for independence on July 2. On July 4, after editing Jefferson's text, it also voted to approve the Declaration.

ELDER STATESMAN
Benjamin Franklin, at age 70, was the oldest signer of the Declaration of Independence.
BIG FIND
A previously unknown copy of the Declaration of Independence was discovered in Pennsylvania in 1989 and later sold for more than $8 million.
IN CONG
The unanimous Declaratio

The Declaration's travels

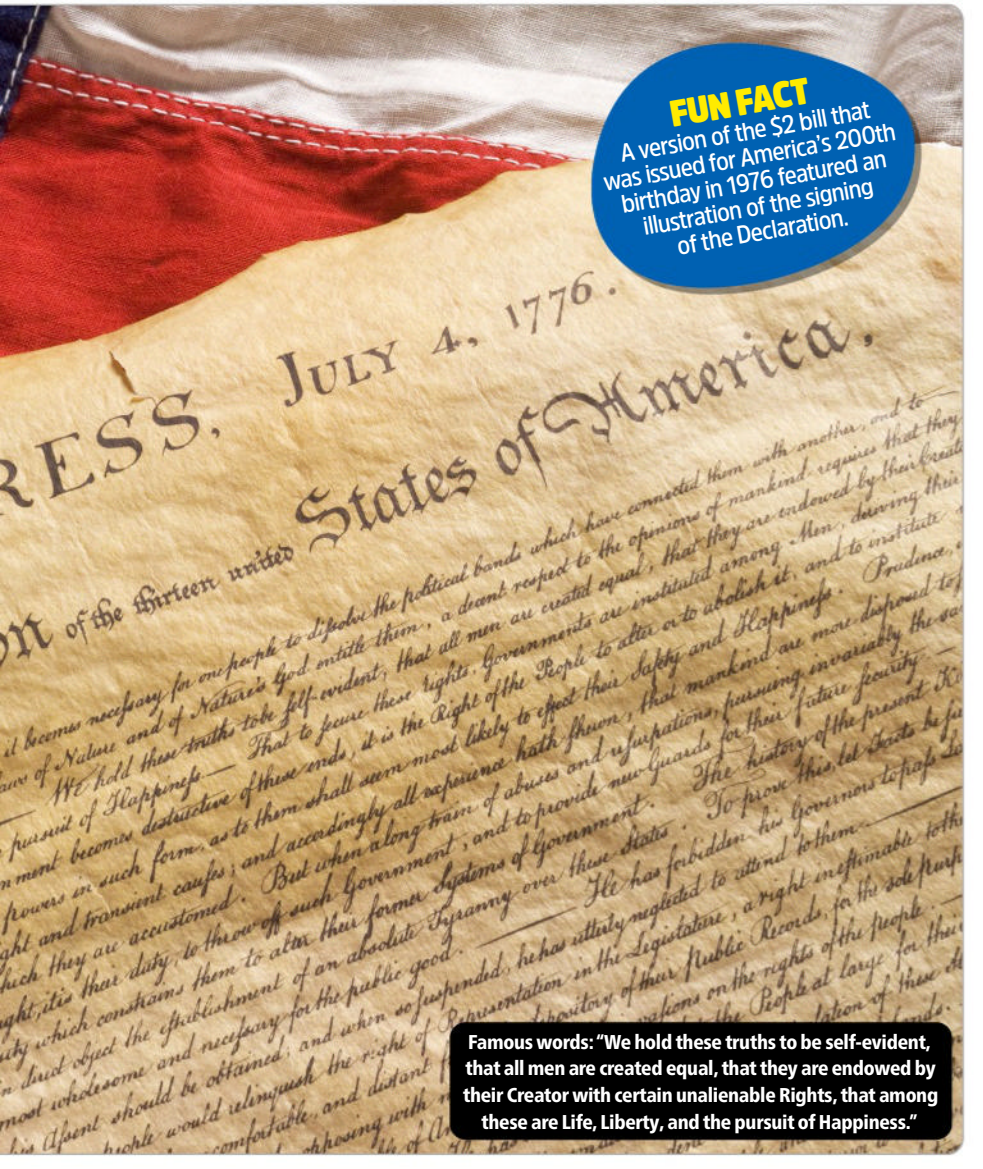
In August 1814, with British troops advancing on Washington, DC, during the War of 1812, State Department clerk Stephen Pleasonton gathered the Declaration and other precious national documents and took them to an abandoned mansion near Leesburg, Virginia. His actions kept the documents safe while the British burned down much of Washington.

For the 100th anniversary of the Declaration's signing in 1876, it was moved to Independence Hall in Philadelphia, where it was originally signed, and put on display for several months.

After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, officials moved the Declaration to Fort Knox in Kentucky. It stayed there until 1944, when it was returned to the Library of Congress in Washington before being moved to the National Archives in 1952.

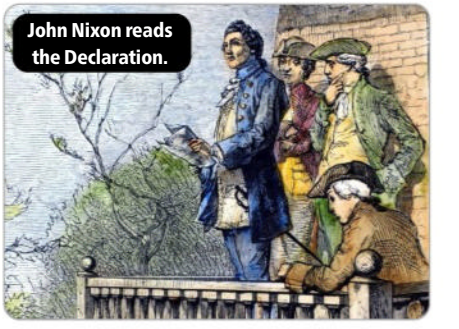
GETTY IMAGES (5); ALAMY; HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

new country


FUN FACT
A version of the $2 bill that was issued for America's 200th birthday in 1976 featured an illustration of the signing of the Declaration.
RESS, JULY 4, 1776.
States of America,
Famous words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

Independence Hall in Philadelphia

Moving the document to the National Archives


John Nixon reads the Declaration.

Spreading the word

About 200 copies of the unsigned Declaration were soon made. These are now known as Dunlap Broadsides, named after John Dunlap, who was the official printer for Congress. The Dunlap Broadsides were sent throughout the colonies to share the news of independence, and the Declaration's text was printed in newspapers and read aloud in public. *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* published the first newspaper printing on July 6, and Colonel John Nixon read the text aloud to the public for the first time in Philadelphia on July 8. George Washington did not sign the Declaration of Independence but was sent a copy and read it to his troops in New York on July 9. Printings of the Declaration were also sent to Europe, and one reached the leader of Great Britain, King George III.

At the National Archives

The official document

Congress ordered an official Declaration to be written on parchment on July 19, 1776. The first delegates signed it on August 2, with John Hancock, the president of the Continental Congress, providing the first signature. In all, 56 delegates, using quill pens, signed the Declaration. This official signed document remained with the Continental Congress throughout the Revolutionary War before moving to Washington, DC, in 1800. It has stayed there since with a few exceptions (see the box at left) and is now on public display in the Rotunda at the National Archives Building, alongside the Constitution (highest law in the US) and Bill of Rights (the first 10 amendments to the Constitution).

An artist's rendering of the mighty Tyrannosaurus rex

WOW! Theropods ranged from the crow-sized Microraptor to Tyrannosaurus rex, which was as big as a school bus.

Understanding T. rex's tiny arms

Why did a huge, fearsome predator like Tyrannosaurus rex have arms so short that they couldn't even reach its own mouth? This question has puzzled paleontologists (scientists who study fossils) for many years. According to a new study, the answer involves the dino's skull.

T. rex could grow up to 45 feet long from nose to tail, but its arms were only about 3 feet long—about 30% of the length of its legs. By comparison, human arms are about 66% as long as our legs. In the past, scientists have theorized that T. rex's arms may have been extra short so it could hold prey at close range or to protect them from injury.

A T. rex skull fossil

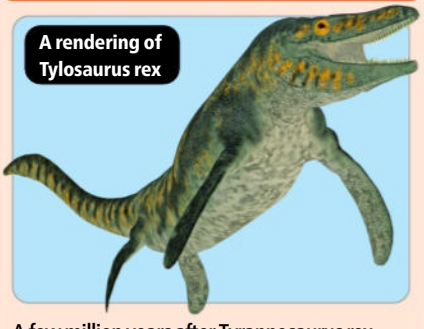
A team of researchers in the UK, however, has concluded that tiny arms were the result of an evolutionary trade-off. As their prey got bigger and bigger, dinosaurs like T. rex found it more effective to subdue the prey with a crushing bite instead of grabbing it with their claws. So, over the course of millions of years, their heads grew and their arms shrank. "The head took over from the arms as the method of attack. It's a case of 'use it or lose it'—the arms are no longer useful and reduce in size over time," said Charlie Roger Scherer, the study's lead author.

For the study, the researchers looked at 82 different theropods, a group of meat-eating dinosaurs that includes T. rex. The team developed a scale to measure the "robustness" of each dinosaur's skull based on the skull's size, bone structure, and bite force. T. rex scored highest, followed by Tyrannotitan, which was nearly as big as T. rex.

Next the team looked at the dinosaurs' arms. They found that those with the largest heads and most powerful jaws also had the smallest arms. And, they concluded, that was the case regardless of the size of the dinosaur itself. In other words, whether a creature was large or small overall, if it had a big, strong skull then it was likely to have relatively tiny arms.

These findings held true for five different types of theropods that lived around the globe over the course of 180 million years. Though all the dinosaurs identified in the study ended up with big heads and smaller arms, they evolved those features in different ways. Some had shortened hands and forearms, while others had shorter arms overall. This likely depended on what kind of prey they were hunting.

T. rex of the ocean



A rendering of Tylosaurus rex

A few million years after Tyrannosaurus rex roamed the land, another mighty T. rex ruled the seas. Tylosaurus rex was a fierce mosasaur (marine reptile) that grew up to 43 feet long and had razor-sharp teeth and a crushing bite. It was only recently identified as a new species.

Tylosaurus rex fossils were found in Texas decades ago and preserved in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. They were identified as a mosasaur called Tylosaurus proriger until recently, when a paleontologist noticed that the fossils came from a creature that was longer, had different teeth, and lived about 4 million years later than T. proriger. Experts think Tylosaurus rex fossils have been misidentified elsewhere too.

A potato-heavy diet changed people's DNA

People from the Andes Mountains in South America were the first in the world to farm potatoes, between 6,000 and 10,000 years ago, and the starchy food is a big part of their diet. Scientists now think potato consumption may have changed their DNA (chemical that carries all the information for how a living thing should grow and develop).

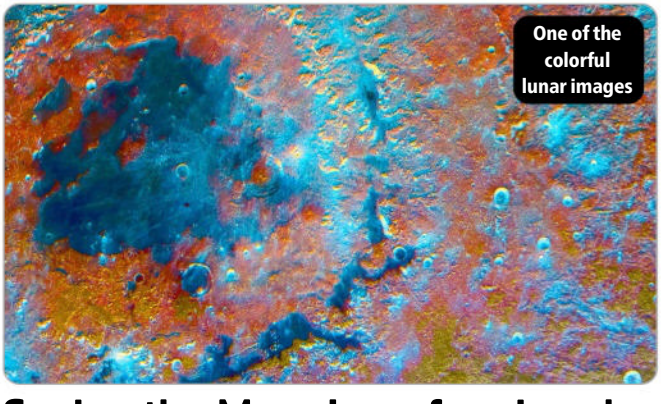
A woman in the Andes in Peru

Scientists recently studied DNA from Indigenous (first to inhabit a place) communities in Peru and compared it with DNA samples from thousands of people across the world. They found that Indigenous Peruvians have extra copies of a gene (short sections of DNA) called AMY1. The gene produces an enzyme (substance that speeds up chemical reactions) in saliva called amylase, which helps people break down starch. People with more copies of AMY1 usually produce more amylase and digest starch more easily.

Indigenous people in the study carried an average of 10 copies of AMY1—two to four more than any other group. Scientists believe that as ancient Andeans relied on potatoes, those who were better at digesting them were more likely to thrive and have big families, passing their genes on to future generations. "It is a wonderful case of culture shaping biology," Omer Gokcumen, an author of the study, told Reuters news agency.

SPACE SPUD
In 1995, NASA planted and grew the first vegetable in space—a potato that sprouted aboard the Space Shuttle Challenger.

About 4,000 potato varieties are grown in the Andes Mountains.



One of the colorful lunar images

Seeing the Moon's surface in color

The Moon typically looks gray in photos, but new images show it in rich color. They were created by an astrophotographer (person who takes pictures of objects in space) named Andrew McCarthy with help from Reid Wiseman, the NASA (US space agency) astronaut who commanded the Artemis II mission.

Wiseman led his crew around the Moon and back in April. Before he left on the mission, McCarthy taught him to photograph the Moon in bursts of up to 100 photographs. Using specialized computer software, McCarthy digitally "stacked" the images together, adjusted their colors, and removed some elements.

The final images reveal colors that naturally exist on the Moon but can't be detected by the human eye alone. They're created by chemicals and minerals that make up the lunar surface. Areas that appear blue are full of titanium, while brown or red sections contain a lot of iron.

AMAZING INVENTION

Running shoes that are recyclable

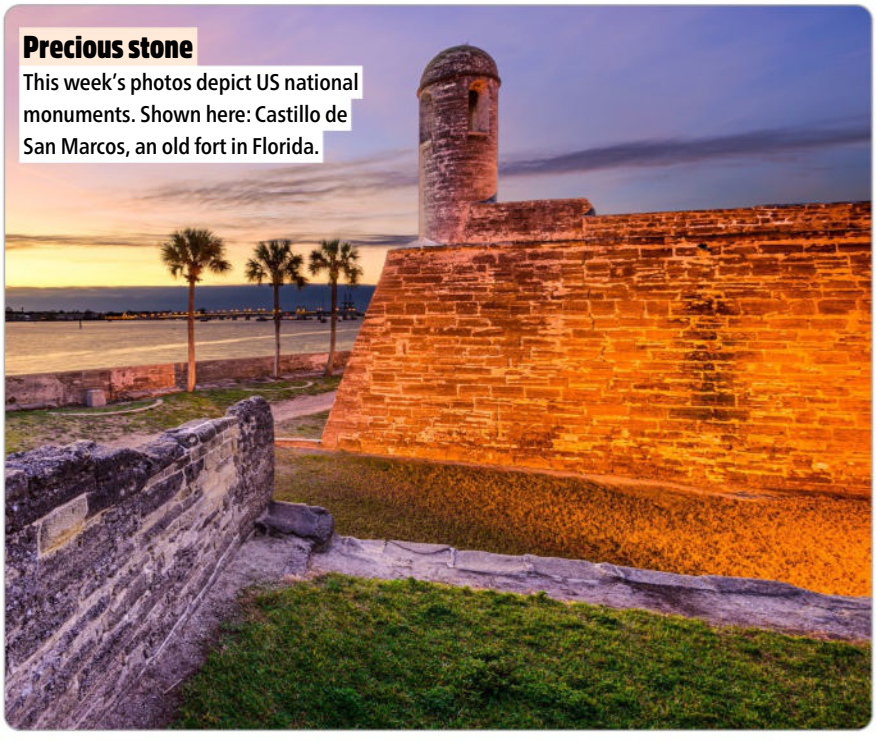
A sole made of ZiProMat

Running shoes are hard to recycle because they're made of multiple materials, like foam, rubber, and mesh. To keep old shoes out of landfills, German company Fraunhofer is making them out of a "monomaterial"—a single material that serves different functions.

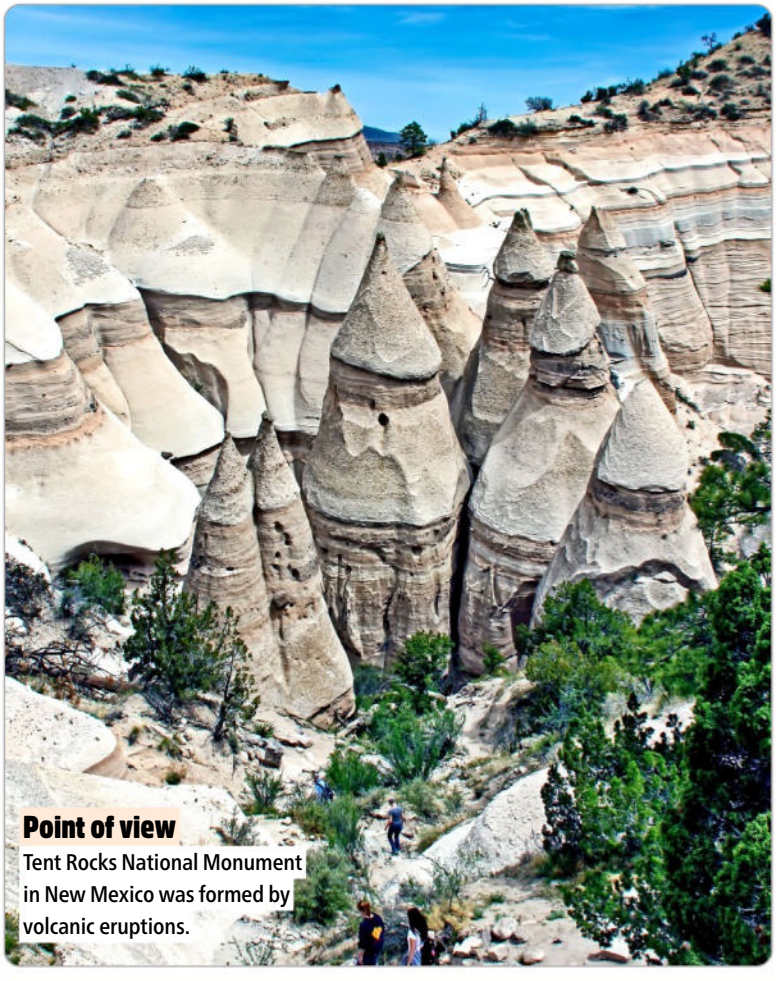
Called ZiProMat, the material can be soft or firm and provide more or less cushioning depending on the configuration of ribs and ridges on each section. The upper part of the shoe will also be made from the material, making the entire thing more eco-friendly.

GETTY IMAGES (2); ANDREW MCCARTHY; FRAUNHOFER CPM; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3)

Photos of the week



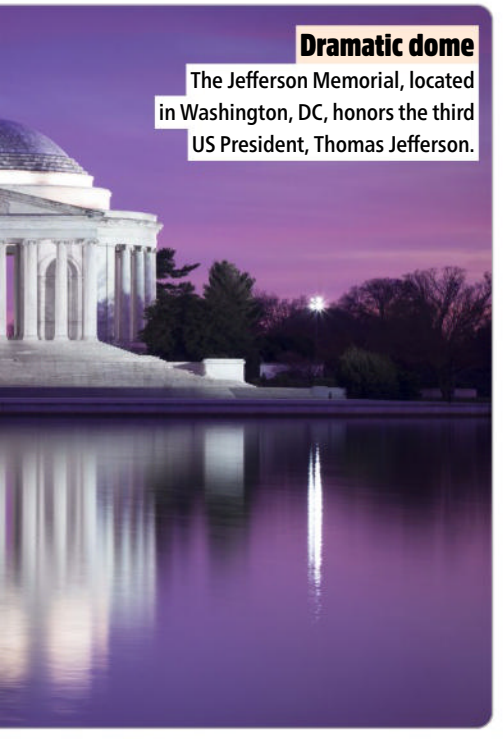
Precious stone
This week's photos depict US national monuments. Shown here: Castillo de San Marcos, an old fort in Florida.



Point of view
Tent Rocks National Monument in New Mexico was formed by volcanic eruptions.

GETTY IMAGES (6)

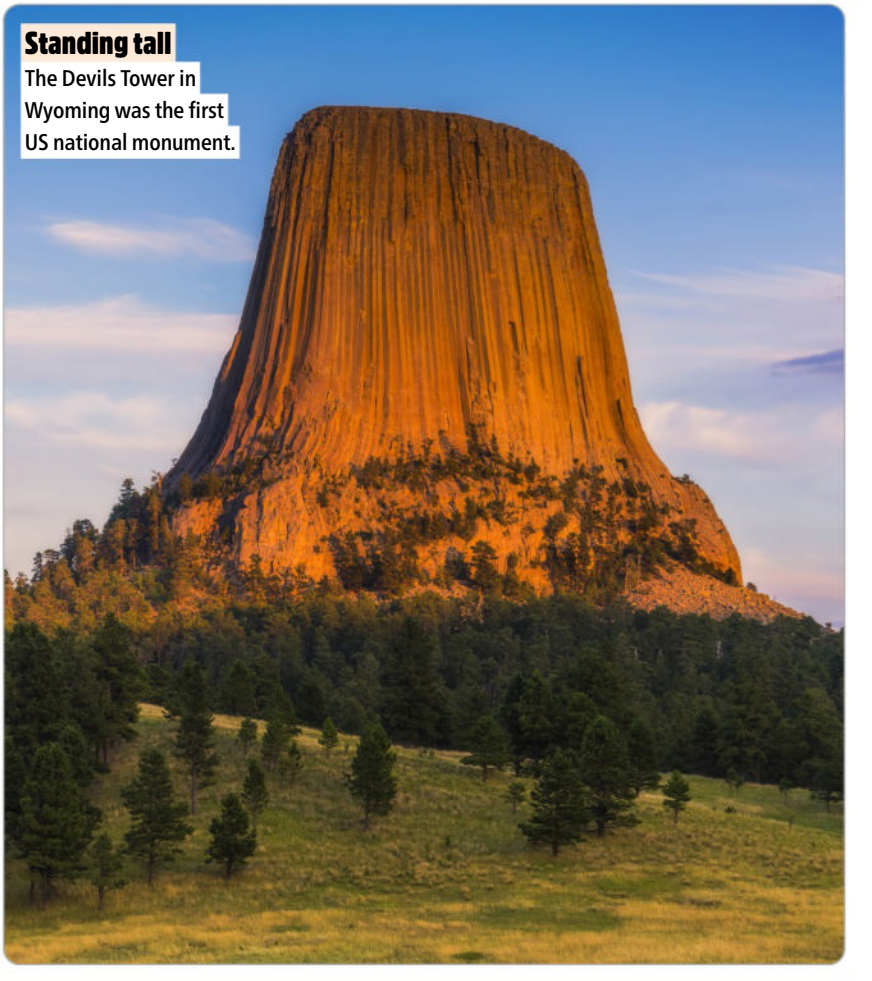
Photos of the week



Dramatic dome
The Jefferson Memorial, located in Washington, DC, honors the third US President, Thomas Jefferson.

Peaceful pathway
A boardwalk creates a trail in George Washington Carver National Monument in Missouri.

Stunning scene
Colorado National Monument features towering rock formations that are more than a billion years old.



Standing tall
The Devils Tower in Wyoming was the first US national monument.

SCHOOL SUCCESS
Teams from the University of Oklahoma have won 47 national titles across men's and women's sports.

The University of Oklahoma celebrates

Oklahoma wins college baseball title

From June 20 to June 22, baseball teams from the University of Oklahoma and the University of North Carolina (UNC) faced off in the final of the 2026 Men's College World Series (MCWS) at Charles Schwab Field Omaha in Nebraska. The teams split the first two games of the three-game series. Then, in the deciding Game 3, Oklahoma won, 13–2, to capture their third national baseball title and first since 1994. Oklahoma was unseeded (unranked) in this year's tournament and became the first unseeded team to win the championship since 2022.

Jaxon Willits

The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Division I baseball tournament begins with 64 teams. After regional and super regional rounds, eight teams go to the MCWS. They are split into two brackets, and the winners of each one meet in the final.

Oklahoma had struggled at the end of their regular season but came back strong in the postseason, beating three top conference champions. They won three straight games in Omaha ahead of the championship series, including two victories over third-seeded Georgia. Fifth-seeded UNC, meanwhile, made it to the championship series for the first time since 2007 and was hoping to win their first national title in baseball. They lost one game in the tournament before the finals, the same number as Oklahoma.

In Game 1 against UNC, Oklahoma scored seven runs in the first four innings and eventually won, 9–3. In Game 2, Oklahoma scored the first two runs in the bottom of the first, but UNC came away with a 6–2 win. A star of the game was UNC relief pitcher Caden Glauber. The freshman threw five scoreless innings, giving up one hit and striking out eight batters.

Game 3 belonged to Oklahoma. They took a 2–0 lead in the top of the second and scored in four straight innings after that. Relief pitcher LJ Mercurius entered in the third and held UNC to one run during 5⅔ innings on the mound. Another Oklahoma standout was Kyle Branch, who had three hits and drove in six runs, including a three-run homer in the eighth.

The award for the Most Outstanding Player of the MCWS went to Oklahoma shortstop Jaxon Willits. He had 13 hits in 26 at-bats across six MCWS games. In total, he scored six runs and batted in seven runs for his team.

A treasured location

Omaha, Nebraska, has been the host city for every Men's College World Series (MCWS) since 1950. Games were played at Rosenblatt Stadium from 1950 until 2010 and since then at Charles Schwab Field Omaha.

Outside the ballpark, there is a 1,500-pound bronze sculpture of players celebrating a win at home plate (above). It is called *The Road to Omaha*, a phrase used in college baseball. The piece was created in 1999 by local artist John Lajba for the 50th anniversary of the MCWS in Omaha. A miniature version of the sculpture is given to the most outstanding player of the MCWS every year.

HELPING HANDS
On June 20, Atlanta Dream star Angel Reese grabbed her 1,000th rebound, a milestone she reached faster than any other WNBA player.

The New York Liberty and Los Angeles Sparks on June 21

Exciting action in the WNBA

The WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) recently entered the second quarter of its 30th-anniversary season. When *The Week Junior* went to press, the Minnesota Lynx had the best record in the league and were in first place in the Western Conference. The Las Vegas Aces, who are the reigning WNBA champions and are seeking a fourth title in five seasons, were in second in the West. In the Eastern Conference, the Atlanta Dream were the top team, with the New York Liberty close behind.

On June 21, the Liberty faced the Los Angeles Sparks in the WNBA's 30th-anniversary game, a rematch of the first-ever WNBA game on June 21, 1997. The Liberty won back then, but this time the Sparks won, 98–97. After trailing by double digits early in the game, the Sparks were down by two points with a little more than eight seconds to go. Sparks star Nneka Ogwumike then sank a buzzer-beating 3-pointer to secure the victory.

The Liberty will compete in another big WNBA game on June 30. They will meet the Aces in the final of the Commissioner's Cup, an in-season tournament. The teams also played in the 2023 Commissioner's Cup final, which the Liberty won.

Recently, several stars made WNBA history. In a game on June 13, Kelsey Plum of the Sparks and Kahleah Copper of the Phoenix Mercury became the first two opponents to score at least 40 points each in the same game. Two days earlier, Caitlin Clark and Aliyah Boston of the Indiana Fever each recorded a 30-point double-double (double digits in two statistical categories) in the same game, a first-time feat for players on the same team.

COACH OF THE WEEK

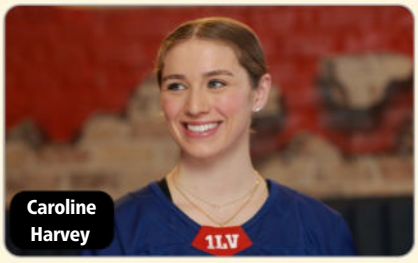
Coach's Name: **Chris Kale**

Team: **Buccaneers (flag football)**

"My coach—who doubles as my dad—is so great because he is always trying new stuff and will always make us work through hard stuff. He is our offense coach, and he runs great plays. He is always accepting of new players and making jokes, too. He always gives us examples and lets us do fun stuff. He makes funny jokes about me because I am his daughter, and I like it. He helps us get a lot better at flag football." Caroline, 9, Florida

To nominate a Coach of the Week, send your coach's name, photo, sport, and team to *hello@theweekjunior.com.* Include your name, age, state, and a few reasons why your coach is great.

MORE BIG MOMENTS


Caroline Harvey

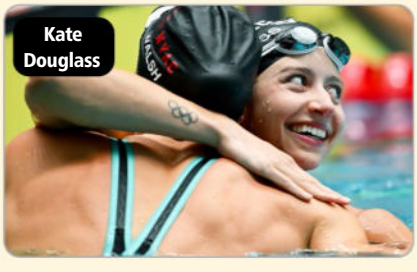
HOCKEY

In the PWHL draft on June 17, the Vancouver Goldeneyes selected Caroline "KK" Harvey as the first overall pick. She is a defender who won three college national championships with the University of Wisconsin and a gold medal with Team USA at the 2026 Winter Olympics. In all, 72 players were selected in the draft.

Wyndham Clark

GOLF

On June 21, American golfer Wyndham Clark won the US Open, one of the four major men's tournaments in the sport. It is his second US Open title. Clark finished in first place by one stroke and is the ninth golfer in the event's history to pull off a wire-to-wire win, meaning he led at the end of each of the four rounds.


Kate Douglass

SWIMMING

At a US Pro Swim Series event on June 19, Kate Douglass of the US broke the world record in the women's 50-meter freestyle. She swam the event in 23.59 seconds, beating the previous record time of 23.61 seconds, which was set in 2023. Douglass's former University of Virginia teammate Gretchen Walsh came in second.

GETTY IMAGES (4); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3)

FUN FACT
During the 2025–26 pro figure skating season, Tomas-Llorenc Guarino Sabate of Spain performed a routine dressed like a Minion.

Minions & Monsters

A new movie with the Minions

The funny yellow creatures are back in their third stand-alone adventure.

Ever since the first *Despicable Me* film was released in 2010, audiences have been entertained by little yellow goggle-wearing creatures known as the Minions. Their main goal in life is to work for evil bosses, and they are funny, caring, and very mischievous. They also have interesting stories of their own, and the latest one is being told in the new animated film *Minions & Monsters*, which arrives in theaters on July 1.

The new film is the third stand-alone Minions movie. It was written by Brian Lynch, who also wrote *Minions*, the first movie, and co-wrote the second one, *Minions: The Rise of Gru*. He told *The Week Junior* he thinks the Minions are popular because they are relatable. "They're a bunch of buddies that look out for each other but also like to mess with each other," he said. "I think every kid gets that, and I think every adult remembers what that was like."

Brian Lynch

As fans know, Minions have roamed the Earth for millions of years seeking baddies, but they have good hearts, Lynch said. "They think they're bad guys, then the minute they're faced with someone who is actually evil, they're like, 'No, no, we don't want this.'" What they really want, he said, is "somewhere to belong" and "to be loved."

The Minion tribe in the past films included the now-famous characters Kevin, Stuart, and Bob. *Minions & Monsters* follows a new tribe. They, too, go in search of villains, but there's a twist: One Minion, James, doesn't have the same interests as the rest of the group. He loves drawing and being creative, and his close friends, Henry and Ed (who communicates with sign language), want to help him figure out how to live his passion.

James and the group eventually end up in 1920s Hollywood, where they get into the movie business. The film pays tribute to silent movies, including ones starring Charlie Chaplin; monster movies; and other styles of filmmaking. "We wanted to salute the stuff that came before us that inspired us to make the Minions," Lynch said.

He added that he hopes *Minions & Monsters* "inspires a bunch of creativity from the audience," as it inspired his son, Henry, age 13. (The Minion friend was named after him.) After watching the film, Henry invited a friend over so they could draw together. Lynch said that if kids who see the film realize they can make things with others or help a friend do what they care about, "that's going to be the best effect this movie has."

The making of a monster

In *Minions & Monsters*, James and Henry set out to produce a monster movie using real monsters. They conjure up their first one using an evil sorcerer's spellbook, and when it appears, it turns out to be a small blobby creature who calls himself Goomi (above).

The film's writer, Brian Lynch, told *The Week Junior* that early versions of the story had many monsters released immediately, but the team came up with another idea for the Minions that they liked more. "The one that really clicked with us was, what if they release a monster that they need to be scary, but it's actually smaller and cuter than they are?" Goomi, who is very smart, is able to stay around because he proves he can be valuable to the Minions. "He really uses his cuteness to get what he wants," Lynch said.

Young Washington

Film about George Washington

Before becoming the first US President, George Washington spent many years as a soldier. One of his most famous positions was a general during the American Revolution, where he led the troops that freed the American colonies from British rule. Now the new dramatic film *Young Washington* is recounting his early years on the battlefield. It will be released on July 3, the eve of the nation's 250th anniversary. The film is rated PG-13 for images of war and violence.

Young Washington depicts 12 years of Washington's early life, mostly centering on his military service in the Ohio Valley during the French and Indian War (1754–1763), when he was around age 20. In the film, Washington navigates perilous battles, setbacks, and tough decisions while learning important lessons in leadership.

SECRET IDENTITY
George Washington was the director of the Culper Spy Ring and went by the code name Agent 711.

Washington is played by British actor William Franklyn-Miller. He told Fandango that the film allows audiences to see rare sides of the future President, including the "birth of his ambition."

Historians advised the filmmakers on accuracy, but the writers used imagination too. Screenwriter Diederik Hoogstraten told The Collision website, "There's a lot we simply don't know. So we always wanted to be extremely respectful of what the historical record shows. It's the backbone of the movie. But we also knew we had to fill in the blanks."

He added that in the film, "George learns what it means to serve" and that it shows how leaders grow through mistakes and struggles. Franklyn-Miller also said the film's story is about "how he deals with those failures to prepare himself as the man we know and love in the future."

READER RECOMMENDS

National Treasure *PG (Disney+, Hulu, or rent on other platforms)*
"This is a fun and educational adventure with thrills and a pinch of comedy. When the main character, Ben, is young, he learns about a magnificent lost treasure. His grandfather asks him to find the treasure for his family's legacy. As an adult, Ben works as a treasure hunter and is in competition to locate the item—which is a cool part of the story. The biggest thrill for me was when he and his team enter a mysterious passageway covered in cobwebs! I also found out why some people think John Hancock made his signature on the Declaration of Independence so large." Kamen, 11, Missouri

Do you have a film or TV show to recommend to other kids? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

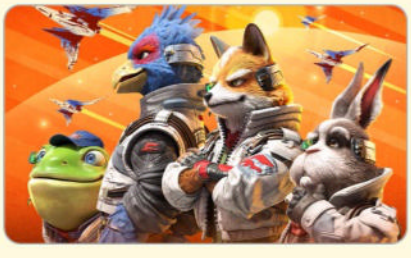
3 MORE PICKS TO ENJOY THIS WEEK

WATCH: DISNEY CELEBRATES AMERICA

In honor of the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding, Disney will air a 24-hour broadcast from July 3 through July 4. It will feature reporting from all 50 states as well as a concert, a fireworks show, and a rare look inside the Statue of Liberty. (ABC, ESPN, and National Geographic)

WATCH: AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER

The live-action adaptation of the hit animated series has returned for its second season. After Aang's defense of the Northern Water Tribe, he journeys into the Earth Kingdom and begins learning earthbending in preparation for his battle against the Fire Nation. (Netflix)



PLAY: STAR FOX

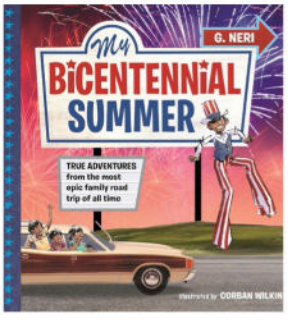
This is a reimagined version of Nintendo's classic action-adventure game Star Fox 64, starring Fox McCloud, a character that was in *The Super Mario Galaxy Movie*. In the game, Fox and his team must stop evil scientist Andross. Players can expect fast-paced space battles filled with barrel rolls, somersaults, and dogfights. (Nintendo Switch 2)

ANGEL: DISNEY (2); NETFLIX; NINTENDO; ON LEFT PAGE: UNIVERSAL PICTURES (2); ALAMY

12 BOOKS ABOUT AMERICA

Discover some of the people, events, and places that have shaped our nation with these 12 nonfiction books about the United States.

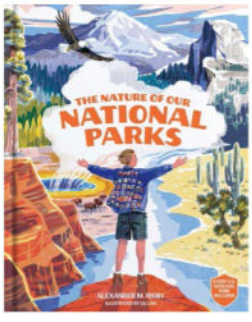
FUN DESTINATIONS



MY BICENTENNIAL SUMMER

By G. Neri, illustrated by Corban Wilkin

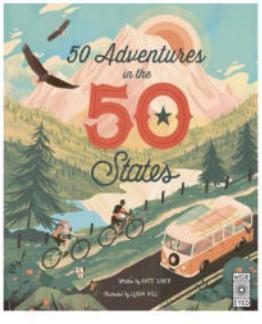
In 1976, when the author was 8 years old, he took an epic road trip across 26 states. In this amazing book, he documents the seven-week adventure, complete with pictures of his most loved attractions. Come for the ride as he leaves California with his parents and brothers, stopping at the Grand Canyon in Arizona before making his way through Texas and up the East Coast. On the way home, the family drove through Chicago, St. Louis, and other famous places. *Ages 8+*



THE NATURE OF OUR NATIONAL PARKS

By Alexander M. Rigby, illustrated by Qu Lan

Consider this spectacular book a national park sampler: It gives you a peek at 63 parks across the US, from Alaska to Maine. A beautifully illustrated two-page spread on each park includes the year it was founded, its size, and the animals there. Tiger salamanders, the world's largest land-dwelling salamander species, live in Zion National Park in Utah, for instance. If you hope to explore more than one park on a trip, the book has great suggestions for groupings. *Ages 8+*



50 ADVENTURES IN THE 50 STATES

By Kate Siber, illustrated by Lydia Hill

This beautifully illustrated book highlights the coolest adventures you can have in every state. You'll discover that you can sled down giant sand dunes in New Mexico, search for fossils in South Dakota, and see dolphins frolic in Delaware. In addition to the captivating description of the activity, you'll be blown away by surprising facts. For instance, sharks are actually scared of dolphins! The final few pages of the book focus on fun activities you can try in your own neighborhood. *Ages 8+*

A KID'S GUIDE TO NEW YORK CITY

By Alexa Ward

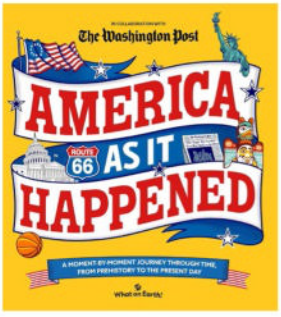
New York City is nicknamed "the city that never sleeps," and this book showcases many of its exciting adventures, from riding the orange Staten Island ferry to visiting Lady Liberty. It contains a mouthwatering section on iconic NYC foods and drinks, including egg creams, a chocolaty beverage that doesn't actually contain eggs! You'll also discover fun facts about Central Park and feel like you're walking around Times Square, the home of Broadway shows. *Ages 8–12*

THE WEEK JUNIOR PUBLISHED A BOOK!

The Week Junior has created its first-ever bookazine (a combination of a book and a magazine). The title is *All About America*, and it celebrates this year's 250th anniversary of our nation's founding in 1776. The 100-page book is packed with fascinating facts about the amazing people, ideas, events, and landmarks that make our country special. Think of it as a road map of the American spirit! To find out more about it, have an adult go with you to magazineshop.us/theweekjunior. *All About America* is also available at bookstores and grocery stores throughout the country.

Book club

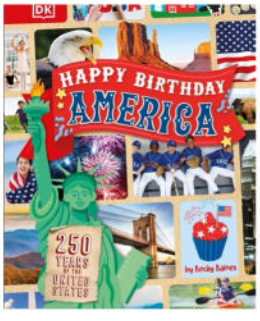
FACT-FILLED HISTORIES



AMERICA AS IT HAPPENED

By What on Earth! and The Washington Post

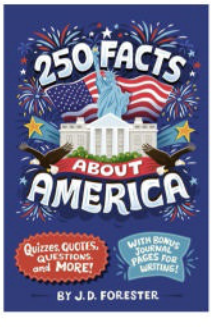
This exciting encyclopedia covers the country's development from prehistoric times to the present. Each page has bold headlines and brief articles on major events plus a historical timeline. Drawings and photos depict events as varied as the Salem Witch trials and Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. You can even dig deeper into the subject by accessing QR codes included in the book. *Ages 10+*



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, AMERICA!

By Becky Baines

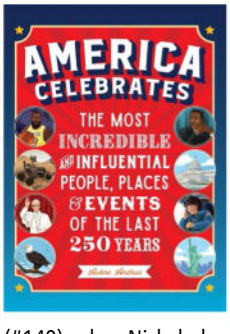
Packed with activities to celebrate America turning 250, including a Wild West seek-and-find and a decoding game to unscramble the messages on vanity license plates, this colorful book will keep you busy. Craft projects include making a lighthouse-themed book nook (a miniature scene designed to sit between books on a shelf) and a flag-themed backyard bird feeder. Dozens of facts (like Texas is bigger than any European country except Russia) also make this book a fun read. *Ages 8+*



250 FACTS ABOUT AMERICA

By J. D. Forester, illustrated by Risa Rodil

Did you know that the Mayflower, the ship the Pilgrims used to sail to America, was only the size of two school buses? Or that astronaut Neil Armstrong brought his Boy Scout badge to the Moon? Each of the book's five chapters—ranging from "America Before the United States" to "Post-War America"—doles out dozens of these "fast facts" that you may enjoy sharing with friends and family. The book also provides a fact about each state, patriotic quizzes, and space for you to journal. *Ages 8+*

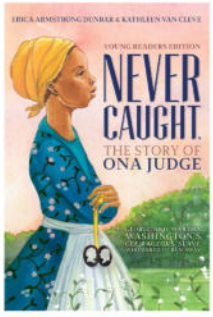


AMERICA CELEBRATES

By Aubre Andrus

This book is a chronological, numerical trip down memory lane, hitting historical highlights like the drafting of the Constitution (#18), the stirring delivery of President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (#48), and the first Moon landing (#161). Pop culture milestones also have a place. You'll learn when Barbie made her debut on toy shelves (#140), when Nickelodeon first came on the air (#175), and when Jurassic Park roared onto the silver screen (#192). Swifties will even find the Eras Tour (#244) featured in this star-spangled retrospective. *Ages 8+*

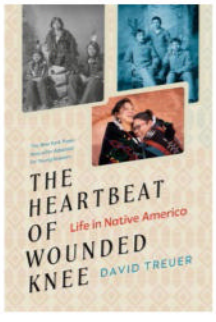
FASCINATING PEOPLE AND EVENTS



NEVER CAUGHT: THE STORY OF ONA JUDGE

By Erica Armstrong Dunbar and Kathleen Van Cleve

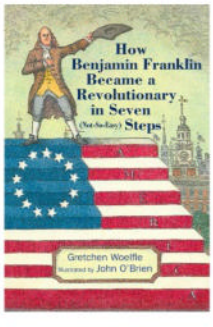
Ona Judge (1773–1848) was born into slavery and grew up in the home of President George Washington and his wife, Martha. When the couple planned to give her to their granddaughter, Judge escaped to the North. This young readers' edition allows you to discover some uncomfortable truths while also learning about the struggles and bravery of a 22-year-old woman whose defiance gave hope to countless others. *Ages 10+*



THE HEARTBEAT OF WOUNDED KNEE (YOUNG READERS' EDITION)

Adapted by Sheila Keenan, original story by David Treuer

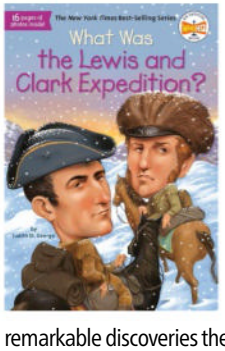
You may be aware that the settlement of the US had many bloody clashes between government soldiers and Native Americans, leading to the Sioux slaughter in South Dakota known as Wounded Knee. While it is important to recognize these injustices, this book also conveys how Native American cultures existed before the arrival of outsiders and how the tribes and traditions of proud, resilient people have continued to survive. *Ages 12+*



HOW BENJAMIN FRANKLIN BECAME A REVOLUTIONARY IN SEVEN (NOT-SO-EASY) STEPS

By Gretchen Woelfle, illustrated by John O'Brien

For most of his life, US founder Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) was a loyal British subject. But by 1775, the newspaper publisher became, as this story puts it, "a die-hard revolutionary." Written in a fun style, this illustrated book highlights seven reasons that help explain why Franklin shifted from wanting stronger ties between England and America to encouraging American independence. *Ages 8–12*



WHAT WAS THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION?

By Judith St. George, illustrated by Tim Foley

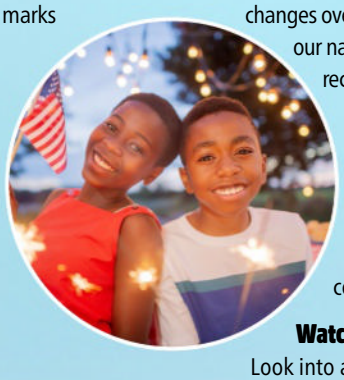
In 1804, explorers Meriwether Lewis (1774–1809) and William Clark (1770–1838) set out from St. Louis, Missouri, to investigate the American West. They hoped to find a waterway that crossed the Western half of the US. This fascinating book chronicles their two-year journey, highlighting important Native Americans they encountered and remarkable discoveries they made. It also describes their challenges, from harsh winters to run-ins with grizzly bears. Sixteen glossy pages of black-and-white photos make this real-life adventure even more exciting. *Ages 8–12*

BOOKS: COURTESY OF PUBLISHERS

Celebrate our nation's birthday!

Mark the 250th anniversary of the founding of America with these fun ideas for enjoying this historic holiday, including making a commemorative craft and patriotic recipes.

On July 4 we celebrate Independence Day, the federal holiday that commemorates the approval of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. (See page 12 to read about this historic document.) This year, the Fourth of July is particularly special nationwide, since it marks the semiquincentennial—250th anniversary—of the founding of the United States. Here's how you can get ready to celebrate America's big birthday!



Get in the spirit

You can prepare for Independence Day by hanging an American flag and planning to wear something red, white, and blue on the holiday. You can also create a 2026 time capsule (see the opposite page) as a fun personal keepsake of this special year.

Find out about local history

Historical landmarks near you provide a great way to learn about America's roots. With an adult's help, search online for a national historic park, district, or monument in your area. You can also check to see if any local museums are hosting special events or exhibits in honor of America's 250th anniversary. A visit may reveal interesting insights about the people and places who built our nation and how your own town or city has experienced changes over the past 250 years. Another way to explore the history of our nation is by reading more about it. (See our nonfiction book recommendations starting on page 22.)

Plan a Fourth of July celebration

Talk to your family about how you'll observe the Fourth of July. Together, you could plan a cookout and prepare the patriotic recipes on these pages. You can also arrange fun games, like three-legged races, Hula-Hoop contests, and water-bucket relay races.

Watch the fireworks

Look into attending a local professional fireworks display with your family. Bring a blanket or lawn chairs, bug spray, and earplugs in case you want to use them. Have fun watching the spectacle in the sky and predicting which color will appear next. Happy Fourth of July!

Stars and stripes snack board

What you'll need

- Baking sheet with rimmed sides
- Star-shaped cookie cutters (optional)

RED

- One 16-ounce container of strawberries
- Two 6-ounce containers of raspberries
- A few slices of watermelon

WHITE

- Round rice crackers
- Vanilla meringue cookies
- Yogurt-covered pretzels
- Mini marshmallows
- White cheddar cheese

BLUE

- One 6-ounce container of blackberries
- 1 dry pint of blueberries

Instructions

1. Wash and thoroughly dry any fruit, patting it dry with a paper towel if needed.
2. If you'd like to make star shapes out of watermelon or cheese, first cut foods into thin slices (½ inch thick or less), then use cookie cutters to cut out stars. Save these for the final step.
3. Line a baking tray with a layer of paper towels to absorb extra moisture.
4. Arrange blue section in upper left corner of the tray.
5. Build the first few stripes around the blue section to help hold it in place. Start with the largest foods first, like strawberries or meringue cookies.
6. Add the first few inches of the remaining stripes below, adjusting the width of each stripe as needed so everything fits evenly.
7. Fill in the rest of the stripes. Stack flatter items, like crackers or yogurt-covered pretzels, on their sides.
8. Fill empty spots with small foods like raspberries or mini marshmallows. Finish with star foods on top.

TIP: If you plan to make the board in advance, do so no more than a few hours to 1 day ahead to avoid sogginess. Store it covered in the refrigerator. Add dry items, like crackers and cookies, right before serving.

ON DISPLAY
The flag that inspired "The Star-Spangled Banner" is kept at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

How to...

FUN FINDS
On July 4, 2025, thousands of letters, pet rocks, and other objects were revealed from a time capsule created in Nebraska in 1975.

Time capsule keepsake

What you'll need

- A wood box from a craft store or a shoebox
- Paint and paintbrush (optional)
- Letter stickers or a paint pen (optional)
- Decorative stickers (optional)
- A photo with your family
- A magazine or newspaper
- A note to your future self
- Current currency, like a dollar bill or coin
- Your artwork, writing, or classwork you're proud of
- A friendship bracelet
- A small toy
- Awards or medals
- A movie ticket
- A theater program

Instructions

1. Paint your box. Let it dry completely.
2. Label your box with the year 2026 and any other information you wish to add. You can use letter stickers or a paint pen.
3. Fill your box with mementoes. See the list at left and the photo above for ideas.
4. Choose an "open" date. It could be five, 10, or 20 years from now! Keep a reminder note somewhere safe and easy to find with the open date and the location of your capsule.
5. Store your time capsule indoors in a spot that stays dry and does not get extremely hot or freezing cold. For example, you can put it on a high shelf, or behind boxes in a closet or storage room.

Red, white, and blue smoothie

WARNING! Ask an adult's permission before using the blender.

What you'll need

RED LAYER

- 1½ cups frozen strawberries (or a mix of frozen strawberries and raspberries)
- ½ cup red or clear juice (like cranberry or white grape)
- 1 tablespoon honey (optional)

WHITE LAYER

- 2 small frozen bananas (or 1½ large frozen bananas)
- 1 cup vanilla yogurt
- ½ cup milk (dairy or plant-based)

BLUE LAYER

- Reserved white layer mixture
- Blue food coloring

Instructions

1. Clear space in the freezer to fit glasses upright.
2. Blend red layer ingredients until smooth. Pour into glasses until about one-third full. Freeze 15 minutes. Rinse blender.
3. Blend white layer ingredients until smooth. Remove the glasses from freezer and pour in white layer gently over back of a spoon (this helps to slow the pour and keep layers separate). Fill until glasses are about two-thirds full. Return glasses to freezer for 15 minutes.
4. Add a few drops of blue food coloring to the remaining white layer mixture and blend. (Add more coloring for a deeper shade of blue if you prefer.) Chill the pitcher in the freezer for a few minutes.
5. Remove glasses from freezer and pour in the blue layer over the back of a spoon. Enjoy immediately. Makes 2 large pint-glass drinks or up to 4 small juice-glass drinks.

JODI LEVINE FOR SUPERMAKEIT (4); GETTY IMAGES

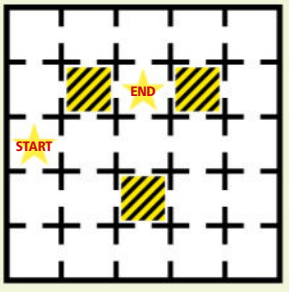
Word ladder

To change the word JULY into the word FOUR, use each clue to fill in a word that is only one letter different from the word before it. If you get stuck, try solving from the bottom up.

	J U L Y
People who listen to a trial and decide a verdict ▶	
Extreme anger ▶	
___ the flag (roll it up) ▶	
How you might feel after overeating ▶	
Humpty Dumpty had a great one ▶	
Attempt unsuccessfully ▶	
Food wrap made of aluminum ▶	
Like a baseball that lands out of bounds ▶	
	F O U R

DO NOT ENTER

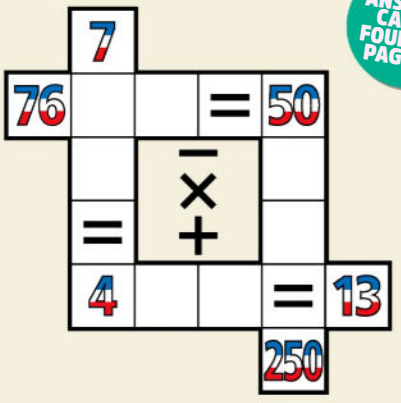
Draw one continuous path from START to END that goes through every box except the ones containing obstacles. Your path may not cross itself, and there is only one solution. (NEED A HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)



Crossmath

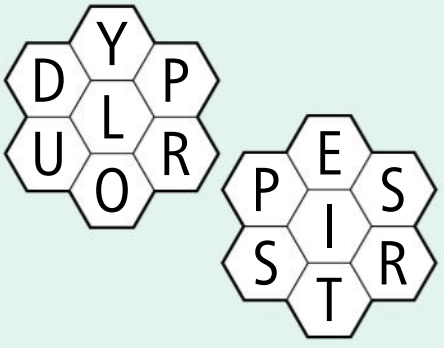
In this special semiquincentennial Crossmath puzzle, all the numbers shown in the grid are related to our country's birthdate or number of items on its flag. Place each of the three mathematical symbols shown in the center somewhere in the grid, then fill in numbers in the remaining empty boxes to make equations reading across and down.

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.



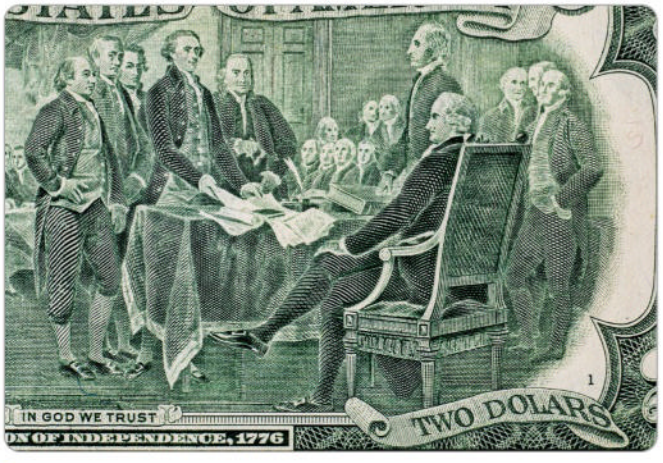
STEPPING STONES

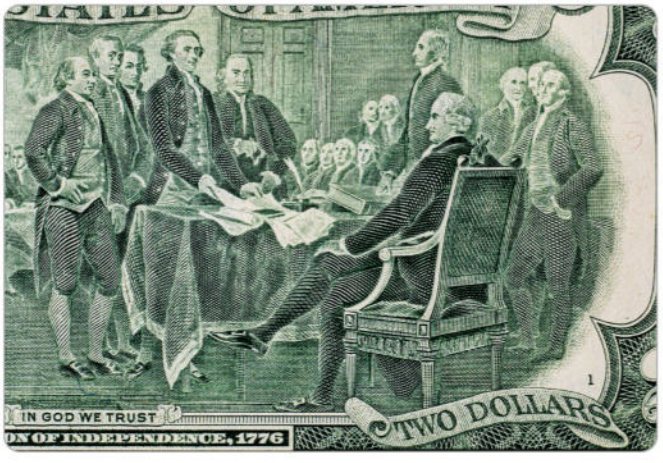
Each figure hides a seven-letter word from "The Star-Spangled Banner." To find each one, start anywhere and move in an unbroken path through letters that share a border (no jumping!), using each letter once.



Spot the difference

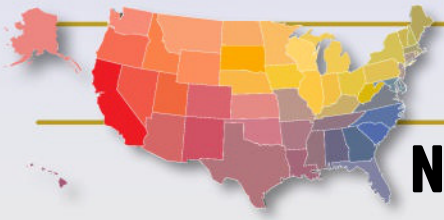
These two pictures showing part of a $2 bill appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?





PUZZLES BY PUZZABILITY

Do not enter hint: Start by moving up.



Puzzles

NAME THE STATES

Each of the 50 states in the map at left are shown below, but made to be about equal size. Can you identify each?

The Nutmeg State
The Mount Rushmore State
The Peach State
The Prairie State
The Sunflower State
The Pine Tree State
The Lone Star State
The Beaver State
The Old Dominion
The Golden State
The Palmetto State
The Badger State
The Empire State
The Volunteer State
The Buckeye State
The Treasure State
The Equality State
The Cotton State
The Land of Enchantment
The North Star State
The Aloha State
The Natural State
The Show Me State
The Beehive State
The Bay State
The Keystone State
The Green Mountain State
The Silver State
The Last Frontier
The Grand Canyon State
The Granite State
The Sooner State
The Wolverine State
The Gem State
The Sunshine State
The Sioux State
The Pelican State
The Bluegrass State
The Free State
The Evergreen State
The Hoosier State
The First State
The Magnolia State
The Cornhusker State
The Centennial State
The Hawkeye State
The Tar Heel State
The Garden State
The Mountain State
The Ocean State

GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

Your turn

Editor's note

In this week's issue of *The Week Junior*, we celebrate a major milestone: the 250th anniversary of the founding of America. Our feature about the Declaration of Independence (p12) explains why we observe the anniversary on July 4 and how that vital document came to be written 250 years ago. We have more special content throughout the issue, too—wherever you see the red, white, and blue USA 250 icon! I hope you enjoy our articles highlighting what's happening in honor of the big birthday (p2), the work of filmmaker Ken Burns (p9), conservation success stories (p10), a movie about a young George Washington (p21), and nonfiction books about the US (p22)—plus patriotic activities (p24) and puzzles (p26). And don't miss our image on the back cover or the photos of our readers at right. Most of all, I hope you enjoy the holiday with family and friends as you reflect on what our country means to you.

Andrea Barbalich
Editorial Director

CHARITY OF THE WEEK

National Park Trust Inc.

This organization works to protect land in and around national, state, and local parks. It also runs educational programs to encourage kids to explore our nation's parks and find out how everyone can become caretakers of America's land. Since its founding in 1983, the group has completed 74 protection projects, helping to preserve 25,000 acres of land. Find out more at parktrust.org.

NATIONAL PARK TRUST
TREASURE FOREVER

YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS CELEBRATING AMERICA

Flynn, 10, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania

Abhilash, 11, Boston, Massachusetts

Zoe, 11, and Lucy, 9, Plainview, New York

Thomas, 13, Mooresville, North Carolina

Mikey, 9, Chagrin Falls, Ohio

Sienna, 11, and Camryn, 10, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Ethan, 11, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee

THE WEEK Junior IT'S YOUR TURN Email your news, views, and photos to *hello@theweekjunior.com.*

Your turn

Thank you to everyone who sent us photos highlighting some of the special places and people that make up the fabric of our nation. We appreciated receiving the pictures you took of yourselves in your hometown or other special spots around the country. We enjoyed each and every one of them!

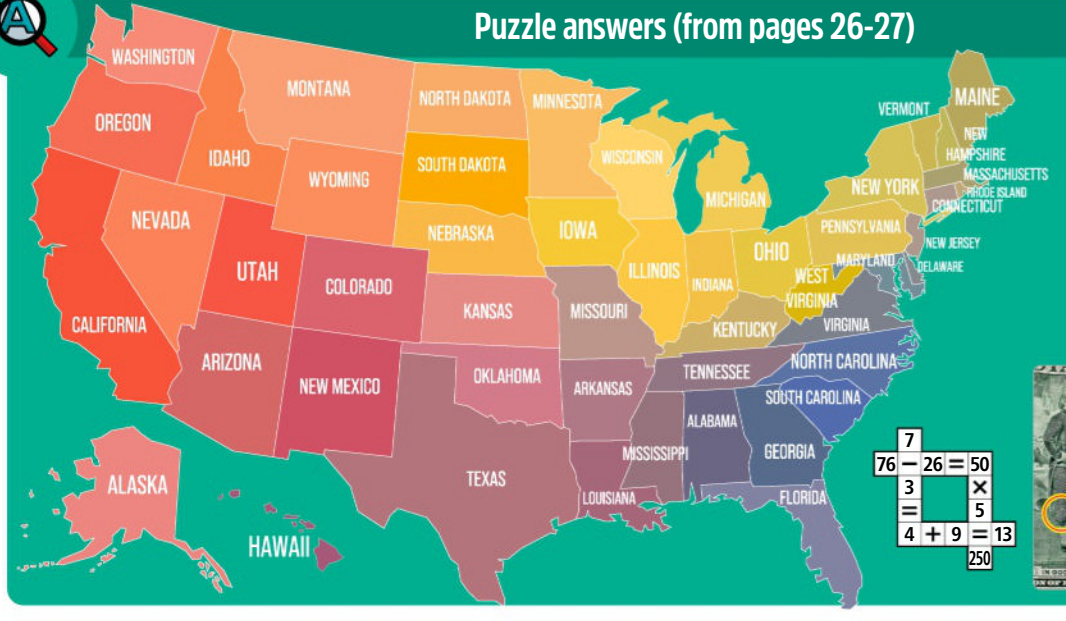
Irene, 8, and Albert, 10, New York City

Abby, 10, Alvin, Texas

Jameson, 8, Cash, 7, and Siena, 4, Wellington, Florida

Savannah, 11, Austin, 9, and Lauren, 9, Charlotte, North Carolina

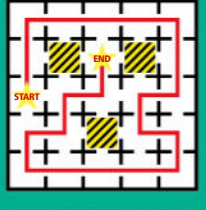
Puzzle answers (from pages 26-27)



Word ladder

J U L Y
J U R Y
F U R Y
F U R L
F U L L
F A L L
F A I L
F O I L
F O U L
F O U R

Stepping stones
proudly, stripes



7				
76	−	26	=	50
3			×	5
=				
4	+	9	=	13
		250		

Quiz answers (from page 30) **1** True **2** b) John Hancock **3** c) 16 **4** The French and Indian War **5** c) 1973 **6** True **7** a) Brooklyn Bridge **8** Beluga whale **9** b) Photography **10** False. They were from the Andes Mountains in South America. **11** a) Cornhole **12** Dunlap Broadsides **13** b) Nevada **14** False. The Sparks beat the Liberty. **15** Goomi

GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: NATIONAL PARK TRUST

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your first name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.

How much of this week's news can you remember?

1 True or false? Tyrannosaurus rex's arms were about 3 feet long.

True ☐ False ☐

2 Who was the first person to sign the Declaration of Independence?

a) Benjamin Franklin b) John Hancock

c) Thomas Jefferson

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

3 Lionel Messi broke the record for the most career World Cup goals, which previously stood at how many?

a) 14 b) 15 c) 16

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

4 The new film *Young Washington* mainly depicts George Washington's military service in what war?

5 In what year did the US government pass the Endangered Species Act?

a) 1953 b) 1963 c) 1973

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

6 True or false? The University of Oklahoma captured its third national baseball title in the 2026 Men's College World Series.

True ☐ False ☐

7 What was filmmaker Ken Burns' first documentary for PBS?

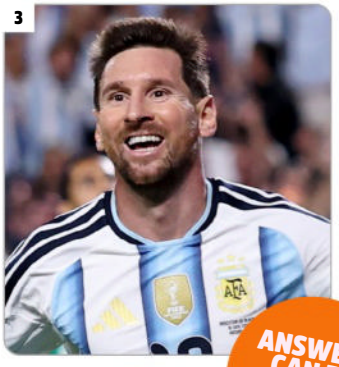
a) *Brooklyn Bridge*

b) *The American Revolution*

c) *The Civil War*

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

8 A recent study found that what marine mammal is capable of recognizing itself in a mirror?



ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

9 Makeda Best will be chief curator of what type of artwork at New York City's Museum of Modern Art?

a) Painting

b) Photography

c) Sculptures

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

10 True or false? The first people to farm potatoes were from the Himalayan mountains in Asia.

True ☐ False ☐

11 Which of these sports is making its debut at the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games?

a) Cornhole b) Croquet

c) Darts

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

12 The first 200 unsigned copies of the Declaration of Independence are now known by what name?

13 The world's most sensitive radio telescope is set to be built in which US state?

a) Arizona

b) Nevada

c) New Mexico

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

14 True or false? The New York Liberty defeated the Los Angeles Sparks in the Women's National Basketball Association's 30th-anniversary game.

True ☐ False ☐

15 In the movie *Minions & Monsters*, what does the first monster conjured by the Minions call himself?

THE WEEK Junior

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- **The Promise:** Take a look forward at what America aspires to be.

USA250

THE WEEK Junior

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SOARING SYMBOL

Bald eagles are unique to North America, and since 1782 they have been an emblem of the US, used to represent freedom and independence.

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